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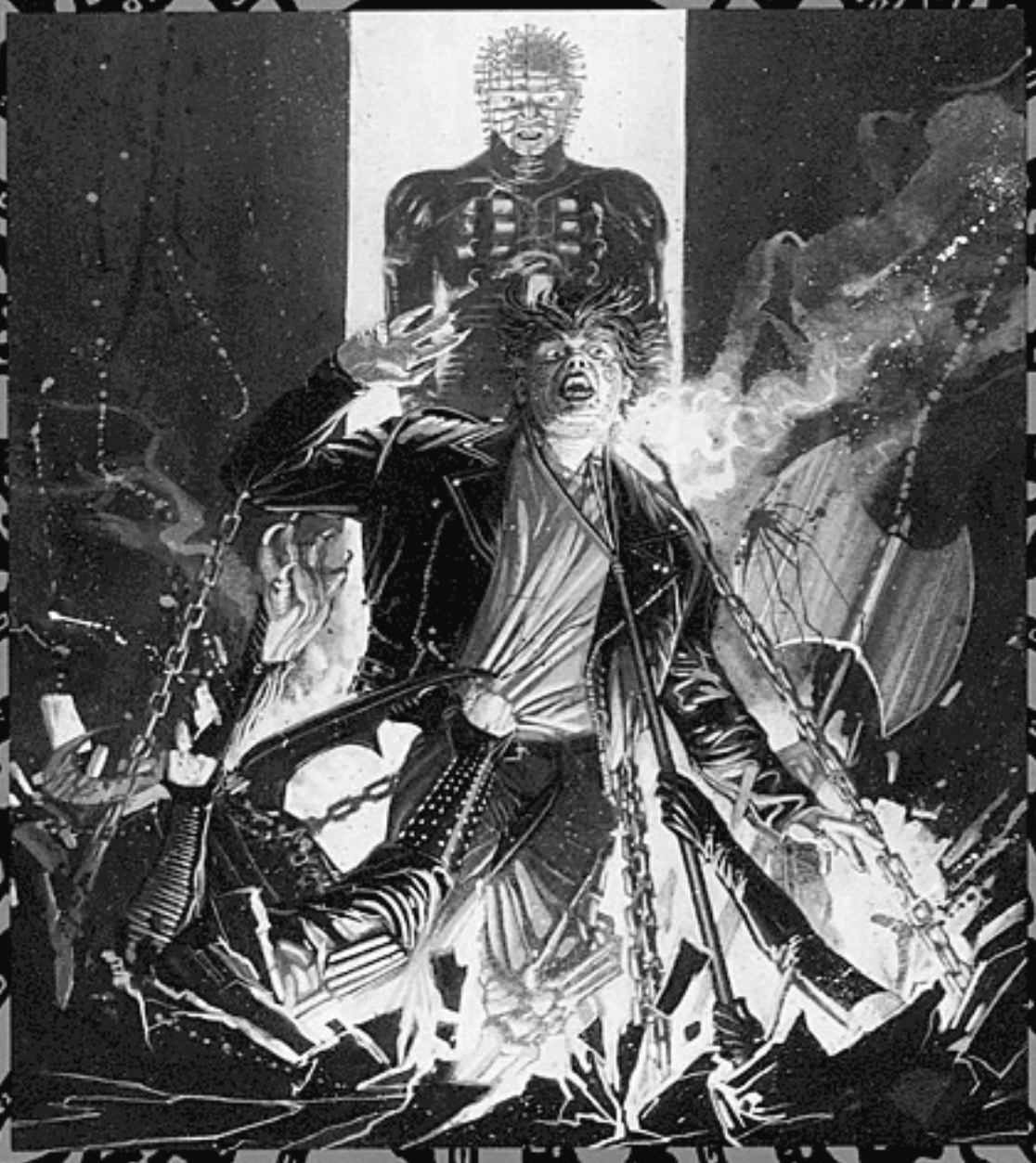
HELLRAISER™ NIGHTBREED™

JIHAD™

from the worlds of Clive Barker



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Book 1 of 2

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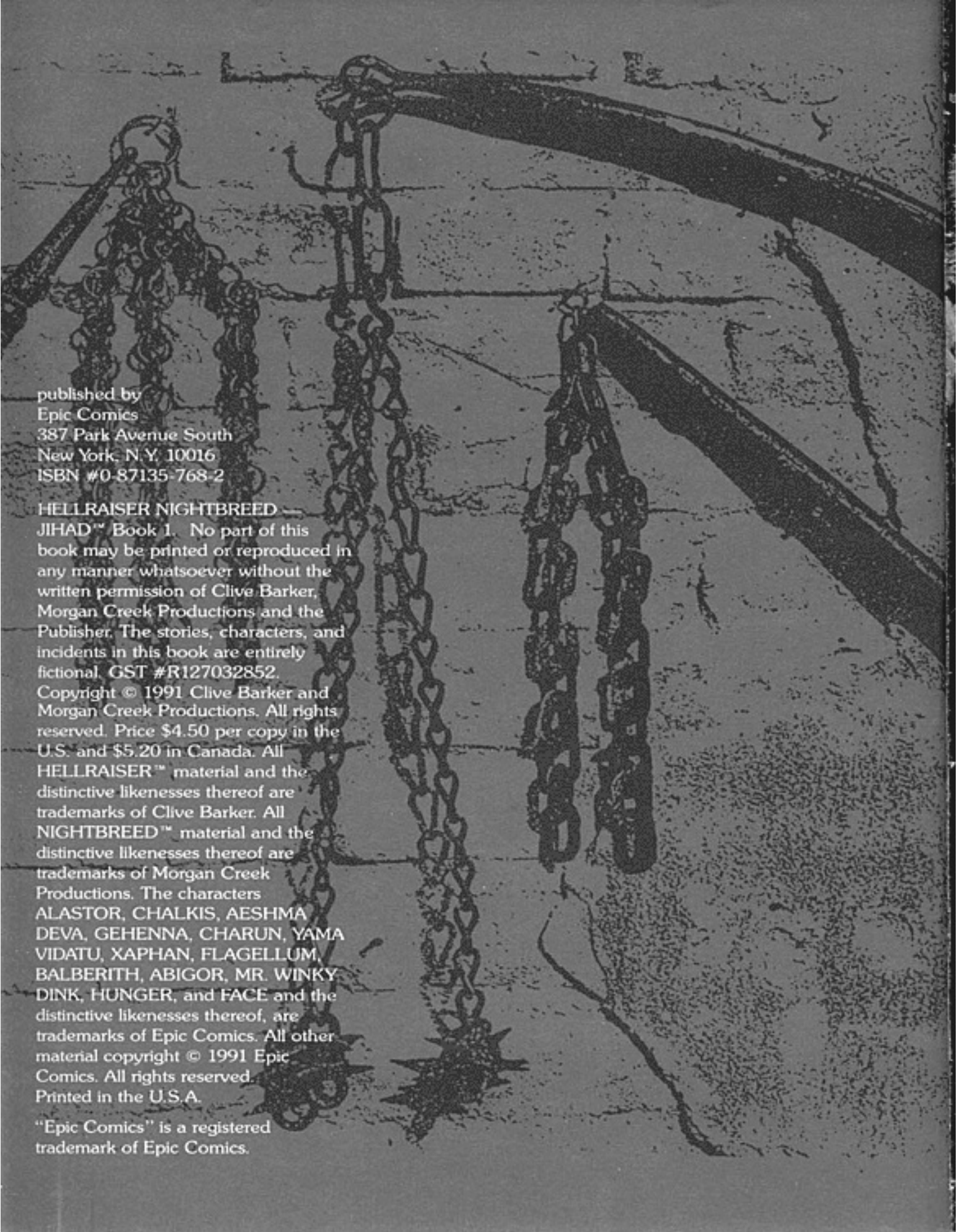

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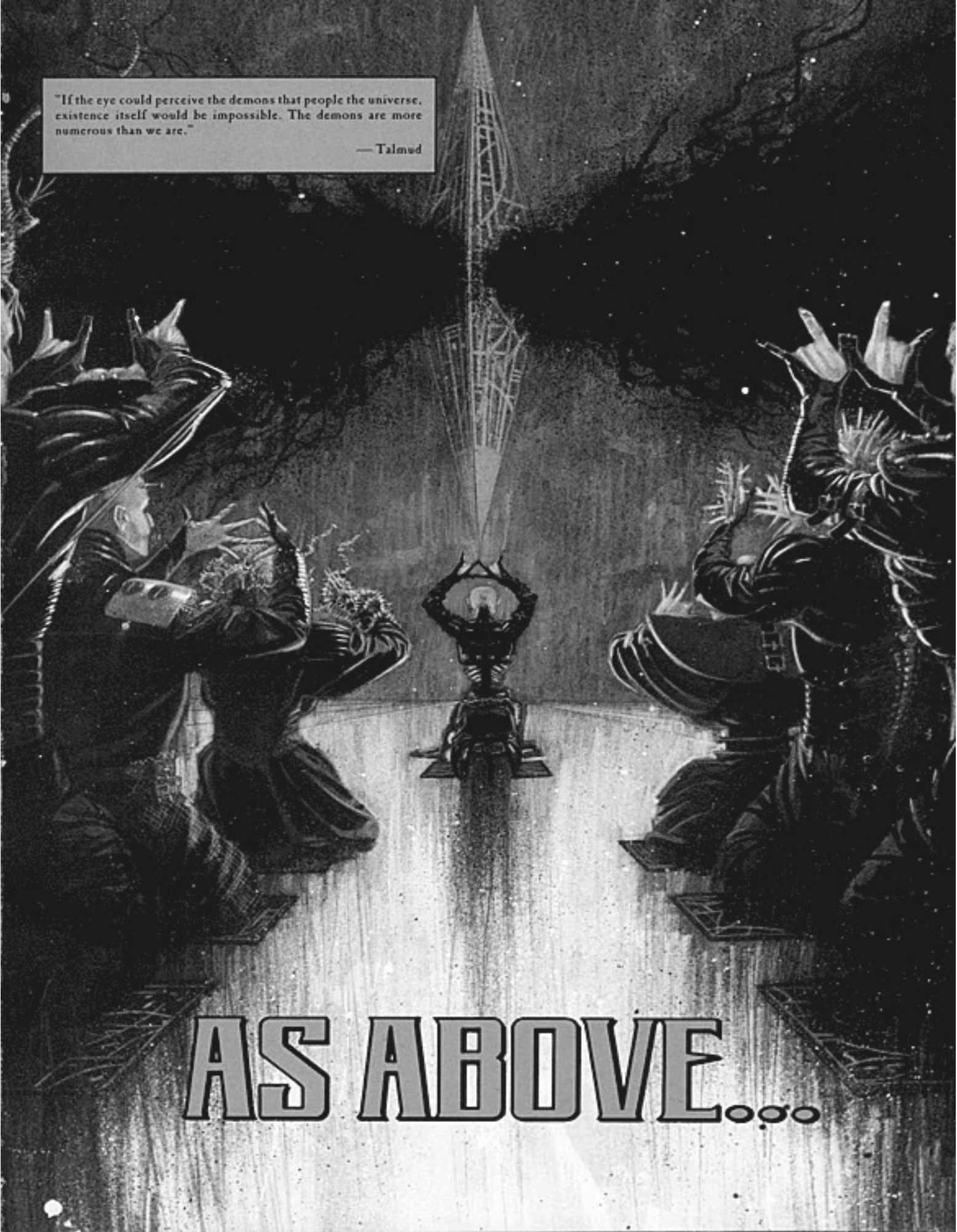

"If the eye could perceive the demons that people the universe, existence itself would be impossible. The demons are more numerous than we are."
— Talmud
AS ABOVE...

SEX.
OBSERVE. AND LEARN.
PELOQUIN, OH, GOD, PEL--
VIOLENCE.
PASSION.
NOW WE TRY IT MY WAY!
SON OF A--!
HOW DO YOU DO THAT WITH YOUR--
A SLICE OF HELL.
ALMOST HEAVEN.
YOU'RE HOT, ALL STIFF AND WET-- YOU LIKED THAT, HUH, PATS?
OH, LIKE YOU DID ALL THE WORK? EGOTISTICAL BASTARD.
--OMIGOD--
DISCIPLINE.
THE LESSONS OF FLESH YOU LEARN HERE THIS ETERNITY WILL SERVE YOU WELL IN YOUR DESCENT THROUGH THE PITS--
--AS YOU, IN TURN, SERVE OUR LORD, LEVIATHAN.
CICATRIZATION, THE ART OF SCARRING. AS CENOBITES, YOU WILL WEAR THEM AS BADGES OF HONOR--
--AND GRANT THEM AS TOKENS OF WORTHINESS--

CHAOS.
SEE HOW... SEE HOW EASILY WE-- COME TOGETHER?
ORDER.
NOTICE HOW EASILY THE PIECES COME APART--
THAT SHIRT...
...THAT WAS ONE OF TONY'S FAVORITES.
SO WERE YOU.
TISSUE IS MALLEABLE-- AND THUS TAINTED; IT REQUIRES THE SWEET SUFFERING OF STRUCTURE IF IT IS TO ATTAIN VIRTUE.
DISMEMBER-MENT IS THE ANSWER, THAT MOST DIVINE RITUAL OF DEATH, RENEWAL, AND REBIRTH.
OR, AT THE VERY LEAST, INCOMPARABLE AGONY.
BOYFRIEND, PATS-- LOOKS LIKE HE'S STOPPED BY FOR A QUICKIE!
TONY?! HERE?!
MOVE YOUR ASSES! WE GOT WORK TO DO!
CHEATING BITCH WANTS TO SCREW AROUND IN THE PLACE I BOUGHT HER?
I'LL SHOW HER A REAL SCREWING!

TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT, LOVER...
YOU... YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT.
MMMM... THE RED.
WARM AND SWEET.
THE VOCAL CHORDS HAVE BEEN DETACHED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS LESSON.
IN THE FIELD, OF COURSE, YOU WOULD LEAVE THEM INTACT SO AS TO SAVOR THE SCREAM ON ITS OWN--
--SO AS TO SAVOR--
MASTER? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
GET ME THE DICKLESS SHIT'S DOIN' HER AND I'LL--
TONY, MAN-- UP BY THE WINDOW--
CRAZY BASTARD'S GONNA--

PELOQUIN! WHAT'RE YOU--?!
THE RED, LOVER!
KEER
AASH
SEX AND VIOLENCE, HEAVEN AND HELL.
PASSION AND DISCIPLINE, CHAOS AND ORDER.
WORDS WITH THE POWER TO STRETCH BETWEEN LIFE AND THE AFTERLIFE.
WORDS PROCLAIMING THE START--
--OF A HOLY WAR.
WHAT KINDA SHIT IS--

G-G-GET 'IM! GET THE FREAK!
I GOT 'IM FOR YA, BOSS, HE'S--
WARM AND SWEET.
PETEY! HOLY-- HE BIT OFF PETEY'S GODDAMNED KNEE--
WATCH IT, BABE!
WATCH YERSELF, ANGELO, I'M--
I-I'M GOIN' TO GET... YOU GUYS TAKE CARE OF... OK?
PLANNIN' ON WORKIN' MY WAY UP IN THE WORLD, TOO, NATURAL--
--HOW'S YOUR NUTS?
GAA
T-TONY--
PELOQUIN! FOR GOD'S SAKE BE--
GOIN' TO GET...
WHATSA MATTER, DENHAM? I THOUGHT YOU LIKED IT ROUGH!

ANGELO, BACK AND FRONT-- SCUMBAG CAN'T GET BY BOTH'A US!
I'M WITH YA, BABE--
HEY!
GIMME THAT, YOU SORRY PIECE'A--
COMIN' AT YA, NATURAL!
YEAH? RIGHT HERE, COCKSUCKER, RIGHT--
NICE BLOCK WITH THE GUT, ASSHOLE!
SHIRRP
WAIT A WAIT-- WE WAS JUST GONNA KNOCK YOU AROUND, Y'KNOW?! YOU DON'T GOTTA-- YOU AIN'T GOT NO REASON TA--
LIKE I NEED A REASON!

THAT'S IT, SHITHEAD--YOU WANT HER TO HAVE ANOTHER HOLE, YOU KEEP ON COMIN'!
WHAT HAPPENED, PATRICIA, LETTING A THING LIKE THAT TOUCH YOU?!
BETTER THAN YOU, BASTARD WISEGUY MOTHER--
LISTEN TO THE LADY, "PAISAN"--
--DON'T KNOCK IT 'TIL YOU'VE TRIED IT!
AIIIGG!
R-RED... WARM AND--
W-WARM--

WHAT THE HELL-- WHAT THE HELL ARE--
JEALOUS, TONY? THAT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT? 'CAUSE 'A WHAT I WAS GIVING PATS?
DON'T BE... I MEAN, I'M NOT PICKY--
GET AWAY-- GET AWAY FROM--
--BE HAPPY TO GIVE YOU SOME, TOO!
PLEASE PLEASE MY HAND ISN'T THAT ENOUGH--
NEVER ENOUGH, SWEETHEART-- NOW LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'RE PACKIN', HUH?
DON'T WORRY... I'LL BE GENTLE...
HYiiAAAA
THAT'S IT, PETEY, THAT'S--
GOT 'IM, BOSS, GOT 'IM FOR--

SHOULDA BEEN HAPPY WITH THE KNEECAP, PETEY--
MOTHER-LESS HUMAN ANIMALS...
OH, WE'RE ANIMALS, IS THAT IT? WE'RE ANIMALS?!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KINDA MUTT PUMPED YOU OUT, YOU PERVERT SON OF A BITCH...
...BUT I HOPE YOU CAN TAKE IT AS WELL AS YOU GIVE, 'CAUSE I'M GONNA SHAFT YOU BUT--
BLAM
WHY-- PATS? WHAD HE GIB YOU-- THA' I DIDN'...?
WHAT I WANTED.
THE RED. WARM AND SWEET.

PELOQUIN! PELOQUIN, ARE--
I SEEN WORSE... NOT THAT I CAN REMEMBER OFF-HAND, BUT--
YOU'RE HOT, ALL STIFF AND WET... YOU LIKED THAT, HUH, PATS?
OH, LIKE YOU DID ALL THE WORK?
EGOTISTICAL BASTARD.
MAKE A NIGHTBREED OF YOU YET, DARLIN'...
WHAT TROUBLES YOU, MASTER?
CAN YOU NOT SENSE IT? IN THE AIR, THERE IS--
SNIFF
...THE STENCH OF CHAOS.

"TELL US ABOUT THE NIGHTBREED, LORI."
"TELL YOU? YOU WERE BORN INTO THIS SIDE-SHOW, TATER-- I HAD TO HAVE MY THROAT RIPPED OUT BY MY BOYFRIEND BEFORE THEY'D LET ME JOIN! SHOULDN'T YOU BE TELLING ME?"
BUT YOU WERE AT MIDIAN-- AN' SEE, MY DOLLIES WANNA HEAR!
LITTLE CRYPTS AND TOMBSTONES JUST LIKE MIDIAN. ISN'T THAT... ADORABLE.
ALRIGHT, PULL YOUR HEAD BACK TOGETHER AND-- YOU REALIZE I'M TAKING YOUR WORD THAT THIS IS HEALTHY ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT FOR A 'BREED--
--AND LET'S SEE WHAT THERE WAS ABOUT THAT GRAVE-YARD WORTH MAKING MUSIC ON!
QUITE A LOT, TRUTH BE TOLD.
LISTEN, DOLLY, LISTEN!
NO TUNES FIT FOR SOOTHING SAVAGE BEASTS, THAT'S FOR CERTAIN.

ON THE CONTRARY, TONIGHT'S STRAINS GIVE RISE TO THE ANIMAL SIDE--
--A NATURE ECHOED IN THE ROILING BLOOD OF CREATURES WHISPERED IN NIGHT-MARES AND CHAMPIONED IN MYTH.
MELODIES CALLING UP THE REMAINS OF THE LIVING--
--TO RE-ENACT A PASSION PLAY OF THE UNDEAD. THE TRIBES OF THE MOON -- THE NIGHTBREED. EXILED BEFORE REMEMBRANCE INTO A REST-IN-PIECE NECROPOLIS--
--FORCED BELOW LONG AGO BY A MANKIND JEALOUS AND FEARFUL OF THINGS THEY COULD NEVER BE AND NEVER HAVE.
THE CHILDREN OF BAPHOMET, THEN DRIVEN INTO EXODUS FROM THEIR LESS-THAN-SAFE CITY OF THE DEAD BY THE SAME RACE THAT ONCE CONDEMNED THEM THERE--
--MEN LONG GROWN COMPLACENT IN THEIR NORMALCY, NOW ONLY REPULSED BY WHAT THEIR ANCESTORS ONCE SO DESIROUSLY COVETED.

THE WOMAN'S BALLAD PLAYS ITS WAY DEEPER INTO THE DARK.
EVER DEEPER--
--INTO WHAT PASSES FOR THE VERY HEART OF A PAGAN GOD CALLING HIMSELF BAPHOMET.
HIS MONSTROUS-MARVELOUS FLOCK SCATTERING, THE DIETY APPOINTING A SHEPHERD--
--A MAN REMADE AS NIGHTBREED, AARON BOONE NOW ANSWERING TO CABAL--
--AND ANSWERING ANOTHER, MORE OMINOUS CALL, AS WELL.
NEWLY DAMNED SAVIOR MAKING TRUE ON THE FINAL OMEN ETCHED ON THE NIGHTBREED'S WALL OF PROPHECY--
--EVEN AS THE ORACLE STONE ITSELF SHATTERED, FINALLY TOO FRAIL TO SUPPORT BOTH THE WEIGHT OF A PHOBIC MAN'S BRUTALITY...
...AND THE DARK TRUTHS OF THE BREED'S OWN ARCANE PAST.

SECRETS WAITING FOR ANOTHER NIGHT TO COME CRAWLING BACK OUT INTO THE MOONLIGHT.
WOW! THAT WAS NEAT!
FLATTERER, BOONE... YOU'RE JUST SAYING THAT TO GET ME IN THE SACK!
WHAT SHE SAID.
YOU GONNA SING ABOUT THAT NEXT?
SMART ASS KID -- WAIT FOR THE VIDEO, TATER.
C'MON, NICKNEVEN'S GOT FOOD ON THE TABLE!
MMM! LET'S HURRY BEFORE IT CREEPS AWAY-- BLEECH!
DARK TRUTHS...
"YOU SAID THERE WAS DANGER BREWING FOR THE 'BREED, WITCH --"
--BUT THE ONLY THING I SEE BREWING AROUND HERE IS THE SLOP IN YOUR CAULDRON YOU CALL "DINNER"!
WHAT'S THE DEAL, NICKNEVEN?
IMPATIENT S.O.B. -- THAT'S YOUR HUMANITY SHOWIN', CABAL, WHAT'S LEFT A' IT!
I SPOT THE SIGNS -- BUT THAT DON'T MEAN I ALWAYS KNOW THEM FOR EXACTLY WHAT THEY ARE!
MY TEETH -- ANYONE SEEN MY TEETH?
KEEP IT IN YOUR SHORTS, ORAL, YOU'RE STARTIN' TO SOUND LIKE CABAL THERE!
SKRNK

YOU GONNA KEEP GRINDIN' 'EM IN YOUR SLEEP, I'M GONNA KEEP KEEPIN' 'EM FROM YA, THOUGH -- A LADY NEEDS HER BEAUTY REST, YA KNOW!
THERE YOU ARE, DEARIE!
WOULD IT BE TOO MUCH, THEN, TO ASK ABOUT THIS FRIGGIN' SIGN?
I THINK I'D LIKE TO SEE SOME MANNERS IN MY MESSIAH...
COME ON OVER, TATER...
IF IT'S LONG NECKED INSTRUMENTS YOU WANNA WRAP YOUR HANDS AROUND, LORI, I GOT JUST THE THING RIGHT HERE...
... HELP YOUR POPS! WITH HIS TEETH!
COOL!
YOU CAN BORROW MY STONE, YOU WANT TO SHARPEN ANY OF THOSE UP...
'ANKS, KIN' S!
YEAH, BUT I THINK THEY'RE PLENTY SHARP NOW -- LOOK, KINSKI, BLOOD!

CTHULHU THIS, SHUB-NIGGURATH THAT! JUST ONCE, I'D LIKE TO FIND SOMETHING USEFUL IN THIS MOTHERLESS BOOK!
IF IT WASN'T TENTACLES OR GOATS WITH FERTILITY PROBLEMS, DAMN MAD ARAB DIDN'T GIVE A SHIT!
UH-HUH.
LET'S GO, SWEET THING! WHILE THE BOYFRIEND'S BEATIN' AROUND THE BUSH WITH THE OLD BAT, I GET DOWN TO WORK ON YOUR--
YOU WANT TO EAT THIS GUITAR, NARCISSE?
OKAY, MANNERS-- PLEASE. HAPPY NOW?
THAT'S ALL I ASK. MIND THE ANGLE, IT'S A BITCH ON THE BACK--
--NOT THAT I HAVE THAT PROBLEM!
HAVE A CARE NOW AS YOU LOOK-SEE...
WOW. GOLLY. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
"FACT, THAT'S ALL I SEE, YOU CRAZY WITCH --NOTHING! WHAT'RE YOU TRYIN' TO PULL--"
"NO, LOOK AGAIN! NOT JUST AS MAN OR 'BREED, BUT AS CABAL THE SAVIOR! LOOK, AN' HOLD TIGHT TO WHAT'S LEFT A' YOUR SOUL AS YOU DO..."
JESUS, THERE IS SOMETHING! I SAW-- WHAT THE CHRIST IS--
WRONG DIETY, SON--YOUR HUMANITY'S SHOWIN' AGAIN--AN' I DOUBT IT'S ANYTHIN' THAT CARPENTER'S BOY'D WANNA TAKE CREDIT FOR, ANYWAY!

IT'S ALL OVER, ALL OVER THE SKY, LOOKING DOWN AND-- WHAT IS IT, NICKNEVEN?! WHAT THE HELL IS IT ?!?
TOLD YOU, CABAL-- I MAY BE CRAZY, BUT I AIN'T BLIND!
THOUGH TIME LIKE THIS BAPHOMET KNOWS I WISH I WAS...
TATER, GET BACK FROM THERE NOW!
BOONE?! BOONE, ARE YOU--
STILL HERE, LOVER-- NEVER LEAVE YOU, REMEMBER?
JUST HAVE TO... JUST HAVE TO GET IT UNDER CONTROL'S ALL... JUST HAVE TO...
...RA'S AL GHUL, IT'S BEEN CALLED-- THE HEAD OF THE DEMON. MOST EVIL STAR IN THE SKY, A SIGN BAD TIMES ARE COMIN', AN' THEY'RE COMIN' FAST AN' HARD..
DON'T HAVE NO ANSWERS ON IT YET, BUT A NAME...
BUT I WANNA SEE, TOO!
SOME THINGS AREN'T FIT EVEN FOR NIGHTBREED EYES, LITTLE ONE-- NOW GO PLAY WITH YOUR ROADKILL, THAT'S A SWEETHEART!
BUT IT'S WHAT THE CHINESE BAPTIZED IT I FEAR'S THE REAL WARNING FOR THE 'BREED HERE... TSAI SHIH, THEY MARK IT...
...THE PILE OF CORPSES.

SOUTH OF REALITY, A MAN'S SKIN IS SLICED PAPER THIN, THE FLESHY RIND REMADE AND GIVEN SOULLESS PURPOSE AS VESSEL TO SOMETHING PURER THAN MERE BLOOD AND TISSUE.
A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAZUZU TO THE SODOMITES...
PURER, AND INFINITELY COLDER.
UNDERNEATH THE HOLLOW FACADE OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION, A LIBRARIAN PULLS INFERNAL TOMES FROM SHELVES OF MUSCLE AND BONE, MALEVOLENT VOLUMES HOLDING THE KEY TO TRUE ORDER.
FLAGELLUM, WOULD YOU CONTINUE?
GLADLY, BALBERITH. A READING FROM THE BOOK OF AGONY...
DOWNSIDE OF LIFE, A VIRGIN TRADES HER EMPTY EXISTENCE OF MORALITY FOR THE SEDUCTIVE PROMISE OF ANY SENSATION, NO MATTER HOW IMMORAL.
"--AND DO NOT DENY THE TABOO, BUT RATHER TRANSCEND IT AND COMPLETE IT."
BENEATH EVERY EARTHLY RELIGION, A HIGH PRIEST PREPARES HIS SERMON, THE PRECISE RITUAL PIERCINGS ACROSS HIS SCALP AN OUTER DISPLAY OF INNER DEVOTION TO HIS FACETED DIETY.
"--KNOW THIS THEN, THAT THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH SUFFERING, IF YOU WOULD SUFFER FOR A PURPOSE..."
THANK YOU, SISTERS. THE WORDS YOU RECALL EVOKE THE MESSAGE OF OUR MASS...
..."BE REGULAR AND ORDERLY IN YOUR LIFE, THAT YOU MAY BE VIOLENT AND ORIGINAL IN YOUR WORK."

PS Form 2976, June 1987

BELOW ALL THAT'S HOLY, THE FAITHFUL HAVE GATHERED TO WORSHIP AT THE CHURCH OF HELL.

WE ADD A NEW PETITION TO THE LITANY THIS EVENING, BRETHREN.
DELIVERANCE FROM THE CURSED NIGHTBREED, RETURNED FROM EXILE TO TEST OUR FAITH.
THEIR ABERRANT INCARNATIONS ONCE MORE INSPIRE FEAR AND WONDER AMONG MANKIND...
...THEIR MONSTROUS UNPREDICTABILITY AN THE BLASPHEMOUS DIS ORDER THEY WOULD SO A GRAVE DANGER TO OUR WAR ON THE FLESH
NOW, ALASTOR!
THAT TIME WILL NOT COME FOR...
M-MASTER, WE-- MY PLATOON AND I-- A SOLUTION TO THE NIGHTBREED--
IT IS NOT YET YOUR PLACE TO SPEAK AMONG THE LAITY, ALASTOR.
6,727 YEARS, 3 MONTHS, 5 DAYS, 12 HOURS, 22 MINUTES, 48 SECONDS.
IT WOULD SEEM YOU ARE... OUT OF ORDER. A SERIOUS BREACH OF PROTOCOL.

YOU MAY BE THANKFUL THERE ARE REMEDIES AVAILABLE FOR SUCH AFFLICTIONS--
WAIT.
LEVIATHAN!
WE SPEAK THROUGH OUR DAUGHTER THAT WE MIGHT HEAR.
CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY, CENOBITE.
I AM ALASTOR, LORD, GRADE OF PSEUDOTHEI. MY COMPANY, THIRD RESERVES, FIRST CIRCLE--
--CHALKIS--
--GEHENNA--
--CHARUN, YAMA VIDATU, AND XAPHAN.
--AESHMA DEVA--
OUR WORDS ARE THIS. WE HAVE SHOWN MERCY TO THESE ABNORMALITIES IN THE PAST, BUT NOW IS THE TIME FOR A MORE FINAL SOLUTION.
A CAMPAIGN TO PURGE THESE UNHOLY NIGHTBREED AND WIPE CLEAN THEIR CHAOTIC STAIN FOREVER.

MOST INTERESTING.
WE MUST DISCUSS IT FURTHER SHOULD YOUR PARTS EVER BE REASSEMBLED--
NO.
NO?
MY GOD, I BEG YOU TO RECONSIDER. WHAT OF PROCEDURE? LET US ADDRESS THIS MALADY AS WE HAVE FOR TEN TIMES TEN THOUSAND--
SILENCE, "MASTER"! LET US HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD!
SPEAK IT, SO THAT WE MIGHT SERVE!
LET IT BE A STRIVING, THEN — A HOLY CRUSADE AGAINST THE INFIDELS.
A JIHAD.
WE NAME YOU THE AESCH MEZAREPH, THE PURIFYING FIRE, CHARGED WITH BURNING OUT THE ROT OF ANARCHY THE NIGHTBREED SPREAD.
GO WITH THEM, OUR SON AND LOVER. YOUR TALENTS WILL SERVE THEM AS THEY, IN TURN, SERVE US.
THOUGH IT IS BUT FEW MILLENIA YOU HAVE TASTED THE SUFFERING, ALASTOR OF THE PSEUDOTHEI, THERE IS STILL MUCH WISDOM IN YOUR YOUTHFUL SPEECH.
NO LONGER WILL OUR PIOUS AND STRICT CONFIGURATION TOLERATE THE NIGHTBREED'S HAPHAZARD SACRILEGE WITH MAN SO CLOSE TO KNEELING BEFORE OUR DEATHLESS SYMMETRY.
MY LORD, PLEASE DO NOT ASK THIS THING OF-- VERY WELL.
THY. WILL. BE. DONE.

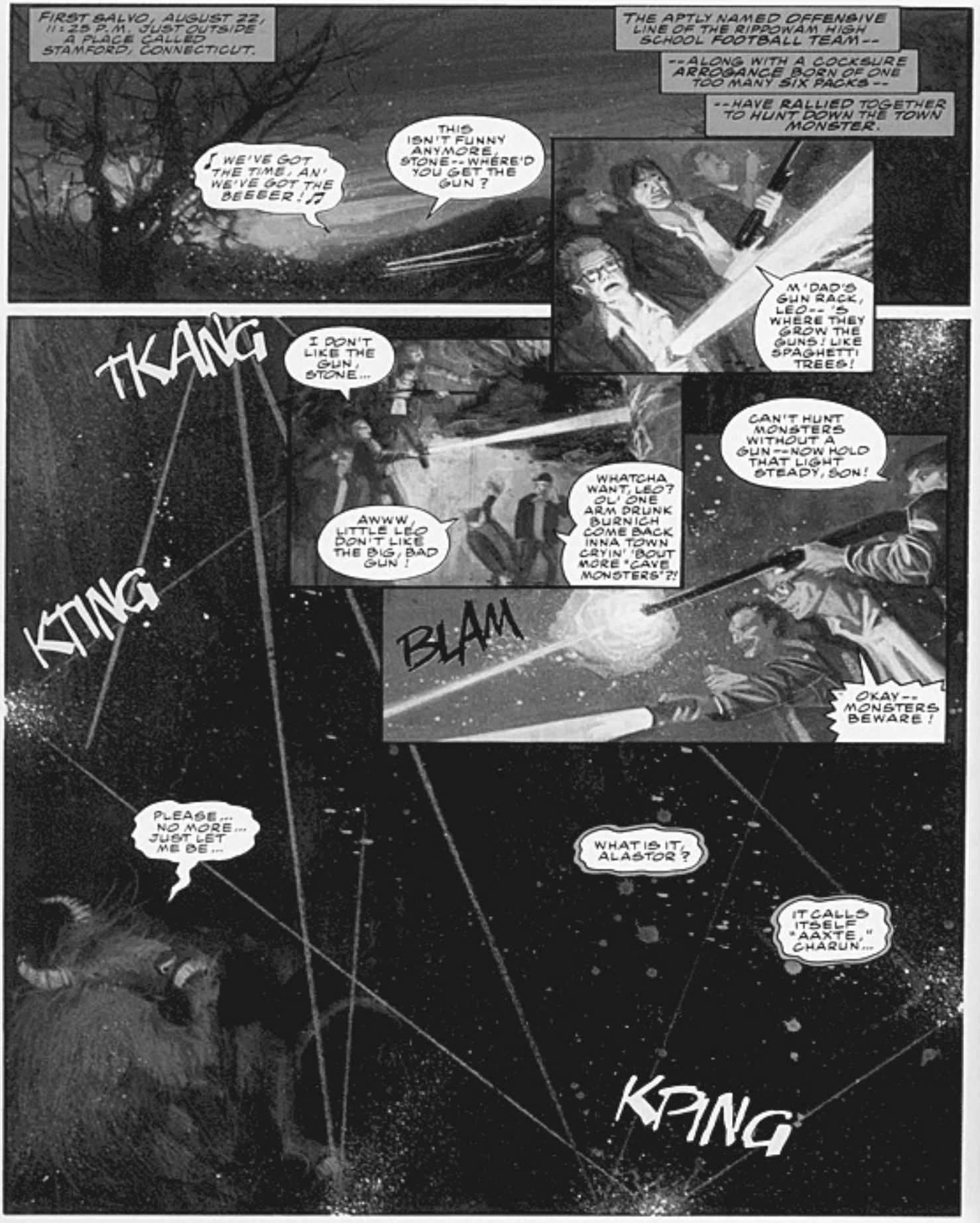
THE MASS IS ENDED.
IT IS MY HOPE OUR LABORS TOGETHER CAN BE FOR LEVIATHAN'S GREATER GLORY.
IT'S SUCH AN... HONOR TO WORK WITH A LEGEND.
"XIPE TOTEC," WE WHISPER IN THE HIGHER PITS. "OUR GOD, THE FLAYED ONE."
ALLOW ME--
A BLASPHEMOUS TITLE I HAVE ALWAYS REJECTED. THERE IS BUT ONE GOD IN HELL.
HOLD STILL, LOVER! I'VE GOT IT--
BUT YOU PRESUME MUCH, ALASTOR. PERHAPS YOU HAVE OTHER IDEAS?
YOU DON'T LIKE ME MUCH, DO YOU, XIPE TOTEC? IT'S ALRIGHT, YOU CAN TELL ME...
YOURS IS A RECTUM BY WHICH THE ABYSS ITSELF PALES IN COMPARISON.
IS--IS THAT SO? WELL, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING--
WHAT'D HE SAY?
I THINK HE JUST CALLED YOU HELL'S BIGGEST ASSHOLE.

WE CAN'T TRUST HIM.
I AGREE WITH GEHENNA--BEING SADDLED WITH THE OLD GUARD PLACES US ALL IN JEOPARDY!
TRUSTING OUR VENERABLE "COMMANDING OFFICER" ISN'T IMPORTANT, CHARUN--ONLY MAINTAINING THE TRUST PLACED IN US.
AND THAT ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO SERVE OUR TRUE PURPOSE.
THE PUZZLE BOX, ALASTOR...
NO, AESHMA DEVA, IT WON'T BE THE LAMENT CONFIGURATION TO OPEN OUR WAY TO EARTH AND THE 'BREED.
THERE IS THE SOLVING OF OTHER CONUNDRUMS WHICH WILL PROVIDE THE OBSESSION NEEDED TO SWING WIDE THE GATE...
WHADDAYA SAY, PELORUIN? LIVE FAST, DIE YOUNG?
"...PUZZLES WHOSE PIECES EVEN NOW FALL INTO PLACE..."

BEIN' DEAD ALREADY SORT OF PUTS A DAMPER ON THAT, SWEET THING -- BUT I'LL GO ALONG WITH THE REST ON PRINCIPLE!
WHO'S IT YOU FIGURE WE GOT COMIN' UP OUR BACK DOOR UNINVITED?
RECREATIONAL VEHICLE USUALLY STINKS OF OLD FOLKS LOTTERY WINNERS ON A RETIREMENT TRIP --
--BUT WITH THE SPEEDOMETER KISSING 80, WE COULD BE LOOKING AT FRIENDS OF TONY'S OUT TO EVEN THE SCORE!
MORE GUIDOS, HUH? I NEVER DID PLAY WELL AT BEIN' PREY--
KRASH
YOU HIT THAT BRAKE WHEN I TELL YOU, AN' THIS AIN'T THE ONLY PLACE I'LL PUT MY TEETH AN' TONGUE!
PROMISES, PROMISES...
NOW, PATS!
THNKT

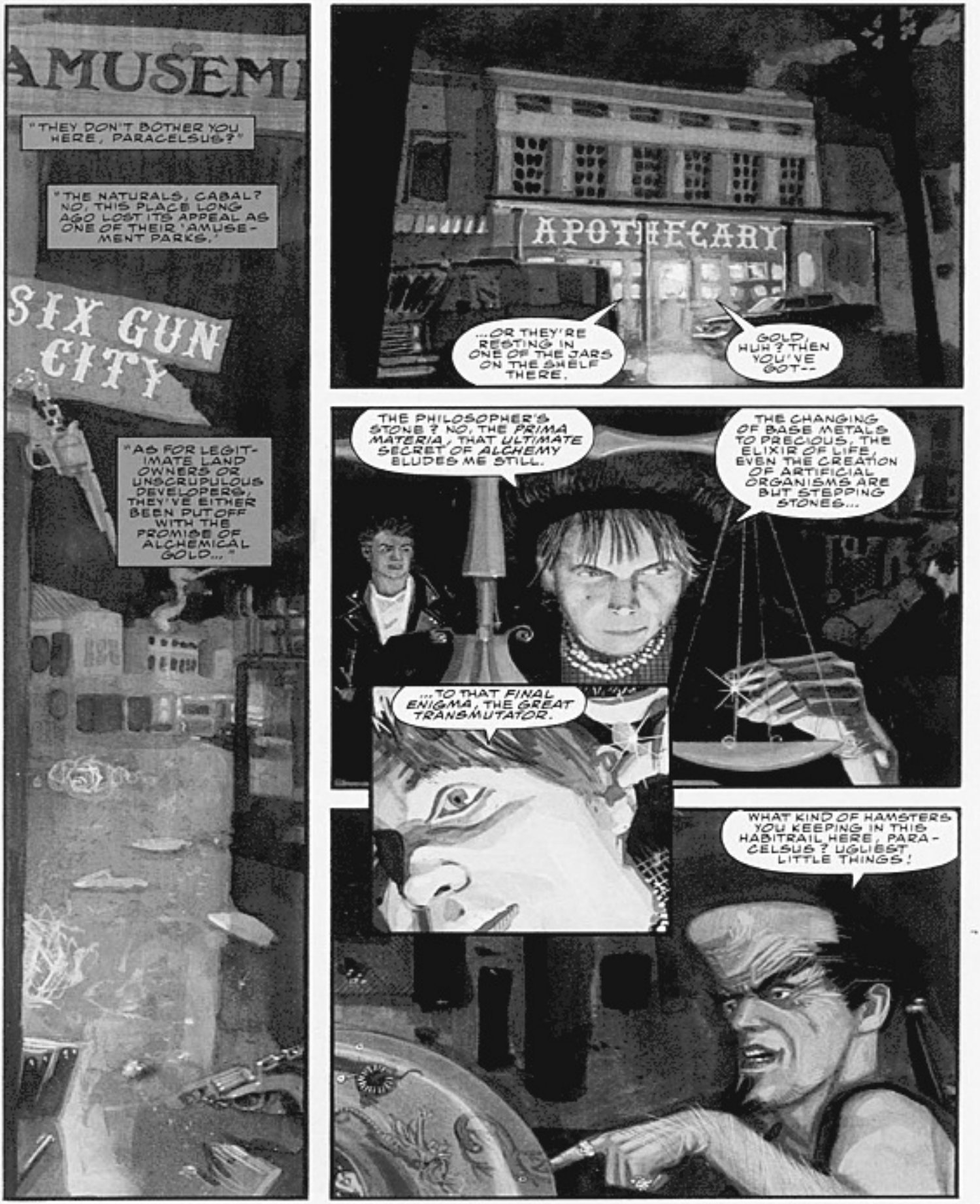
KEEP ON TRUCKIN' MY WAY, MS. R.V.--
SCREEE
GOTCHA NOW, YOU FOUR WHEELED SON OF A BITCH!
KNOCK-KNOCK, ANYBODY--
--HUH?
SMASH
URRGK

WHADDA YOU KNOW? FUNNY THINGS COMING OUTTA YOUR HEAD ARE GOOD FOR SOMETHING, AFTER ALL!
CABAL, YOU MONGREL BASTARD--
KNEW YOU'D HAVE AN ATTITUDE, PELOQUIN... S'WHY I ARRANGED THIS FRIENDLY GET-TOGETHER THE WAY I--
OH-OH.
"OH-OH"?
YOU WANT ATTITUDE, CABAL?--
--YOU GOT IT!
TRKAMM
NICE DRIVING, LADY, BUT WE GOT BUSINESS WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND--
ONLY BUSINESS YOU GOT, PRETTY BOY, IS WITH THE END'A THIS PIECE!
PELOQUIN, THIS IS ABOUT THE 'BREED-- IT'S SERIOUS! TELL HER--
PERSONALLY, I'D LOVE TO CHEW THE FAT, SAVIOUR-BOY, BUT I'D SAY YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO CHECK WITH THE LITTLE LADY FIRST...
...AN' IT TAKES MORE'N A COMPLIMENT ON GUITAR PLAYIN' TO SOFTEN HER UP...


FIRST SALVO, AUGUST 22, 11:25 P.M., JUST OUTSIDE A PLACE CALLED STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT.
THE APTLY NAMED OFFENSIVE LINE OF THE RIPPOWAM HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM--
--ALONG WITH A COCKSURE ARROGANCE BORN OF ONE TOO MANY SIX PACKS--
--HAVE RALLIED TOGETHER TO HUNT DOWN THE TOWN MONSTER.
♪ WE'VE GOT THE TIME, AN' WE'VE GOT THE BEEBER! ♫
THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE, STONE--WHERE'D YOU GET THE GUN?
M'DAD'S GUN RACK, LEO--'S WHERE THEY GROW THE GUNS! LIKE SPAGHETTI TREES!
TKANG
I DON'T LIKE THE GUN, STONE...
AWWW, LITTLE LEO DON'T LIKE THE BIG, BAD GUN!
WHATCHA WANT, LEO? OL' ONE ARM DRUNK BURNICH COME BACK INNA TOWN CRYIN' 'BOUT MORE "CAVE MONSTERS"?!
CAN'T HUNT MONSTERS WITHOUT A GUN--NOW HOLD THAT LIGHT STEADY, SON!
KTING
BLAM
OKAY--MONSTERS BEWARE!
PLEASE... NO MORE... JUST LET ME BE...
WHAT IS IT, ALASTOR?
IT CALLS ITSELF "AAXTE," CHARUN...
KPING

MUST BE--A WAY OUT ANOTHER WAY OUT--
...AND HELL'S STRUCTURES ARE DESPERATELY NEEDED TO CHECK ITS DISRUPTIVE INFLUENCE ON THESE HUMAN ADOLESCENTS!
PLEASE--A WAY OUT--
IT OBSESSES OVER ESCAPE, ALASTOR...
SKKT
SUCH FERVENT DESIRE MUST NOT GO...UNREWARDED.
CAN YOU PLEASE HELP ME...WITH MY TORMENT?
OF COURSE, CHILD...
WHO--?!? HAVE YOU COME IN ANSWER TO--?!?
...WE'RE EXPERTS AT IT.

HEY--THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING! THERE'S REALLY SOMETHING IN THERE!
WELL, DON'T PISS YOUR PANTS ABOUT IT, LEO, WE'LL JUST SHOOT THE DAMN--
THIS AIN'T FUNNY ANYMORE...
LEO, THE LIGHT, PUT THE LIGHT ON--
NO, PLEASE. PISS YOUR PANTS, SHIT YOUR SHORTS.
ENJOY YOUR FINAL MOMENTS OF WEAK FLESH WHILE YOU STILL CAN.
MY FACE GODDAMN BIRD TOOK MY--
PLEASE GOD NO--
"FOR WHERE WE HAVE COME TO TAKE YOU IS AN EXPERIENCE IN A WHOLLY NEW ORDER OF ANATOMY...
"...LACKING, CERTAINLY, IN THE UNEVEN ORIFICES WHICH WOULD NORMALLY MAR THE OUTER FORM FOR THE PURPOSE OF RELIEF."
"THE LIGHT LEO BASTARD THE LIGHT I CAN'T AIM WITHOUT THE--"
"A RESTRAINED REBIRTH DESIGNED TO LEAVE YOU PRAYING FOR THE SIMPLE PLEASURES OF BODILY FUNCTIONS..."


AMUSEM
"THEY DON'T BOTHER YOU HERE, PARACELSUS?"
"THE NATURALS, CABAL? NO, THIS PLACE LONG AGO LOST ITS APPEAL AS ONE OF THEIR 'AMUSEMENT PARKS.'
SIX GUN CITY
"AS FOR LEGITIMATE LAND OWNERS OR UNSCRUPULOUS DEVELOPERS, THEY'VE EITHER BEEN PUT OFF WITH THE PROMISE OF ALCHEMICAL GOLD..."
APOTHECARY
...OR THEY'RE RESTING IN ONE OF THE JARS ON THE SHELF THERE.
GOLD, HUH? THEN YOU'VE GOT--
THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE? NO, THE PRIMA MATERIA, THAT ULTIMATE SECRET OF ALCHEMY ELUDES ME STILL.
THE CHANGING OF BASE METALS TO PRECIOUS, THE ELIXIR OF LIFE, EVEN THE CREATION OF ARTIFICIAL ORGANISMS ARE BUT STEPPING STONES...
...TO THAT FINAL ENIGMA, THE GREAT TRANSMUTATOR.
WHAT KIND OF HAMSTERS YOU KEEPING IN THIS HABITRAIL HERE, PARACELSUS? UGLIEST LITTLE THINGS!

NOT HAMSTERS, KINSKI-- HOMUNCULOUS.
SPERM IS PLACED IN A SEALED VESSEL AND INCUBATED IN HORSE MANURE FOR 40 DAYS UNTIL AN EMBRYO APPEARS.
WELL... AREN'T YOU JUST THE PROUD PAPA?
AS PLEASURABLE AS SHARING TALES OF THE GREAT WORK MIGHT BE, WE ALL KNOW WE ARE AVOIDING THE REAL ISSUE.
THE DEATHS OF OUR FELLOWS --AAXTE, THE RUSALKA, OTHERS STILL.
YOU SAID YOU HAD SOMETHING TO ADD-- ABOUT THE BERSERKERS?
BERSERKERS?
SORT OF LIKE PELOQUIN, BUT WITHOUT THE SOCIAL GRACES.
WANT TO LOSE THE REST OF THAT FACE, THESPIAN?
IT WAS DURING THE GREAT WAR -- THE FIRST WORLD WAR -- THAT I DESIGNED THEM FOR THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND.

"THE WILDING... A WARRIOR CLASS TO EXTERMINATE THE KAISER'S ENEMIES.
SOME LOAD A' CUM AND HORSE SHIT FOR THOSE BAD BOYS, I BET!
PELOQUIN, YOU HAVE NO IDEA.
"THE BERSERKERS SHOWED NO MERCY TO THE GERMANS' ENEMIES... OR THE GERMANS THEMSELVES.
"THEY WERE UNSTOPPABLE, MY CREATIONS. THEIR CARNAGE SLICING THROUGH BATTALIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BATTLEFIELD..."
THE KAISER HAD ME RECALL THEM FROM SERVICE, AND I SAW TO IT THAT THEY WERE WELCOMED IN MIDIAN.
AND WHEN THAT HAVEN MET ITS FATE, THEY RETURNED TO ME, PRODIGAL SONS.
VERY TOUCHING.
I AWOKE TO A SOUND LIKE THUNDER, STROBING COBALT LIGHT DANCING WILDLY WITHIN THE BARN WHERE MY BERSERKERS TOILED -- AND SHRIEKED.
I RAN TO THEM, THE LIGHT FADING WITH THEIR CRIES, BUT--
CUT TO THE CHASE.
THEIR RUDIMENTARY SKILLS WERE USEFUL IN CERTAIN OF MY WORK, ALLOWING ME TO GAIN A MOMENT'S REST AS THEY FORGED LONG HOURS INTO THE NIGHT...

I FEAR THEY FOUND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE...

SECOND WAVE OF ATTACK, SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO.
GENTILE'S GAS
& EXOTIC ANIMAL EMPORIUM
MOST THAT HAD BOUGHT INTO THE DREAM OF "HORIZON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT" HAD JUST AS QUICKLY SOLD OUT OF THE HEAT-BAKED REALITY.
WHATEVER--
NOT STEVEN P-- "DON'T STAND FER NOTHIN', JUST A 'P'" --GENTILE.
SURROUNDED BY EMPTY, ARID ACRES, HE'D BUILT ON THE HOPELESSNESS OF HIS DREAM, SEARCHING THE HORIZON FOR THE REALITY OF THAT ONE PAYOFF.
MORE INSIDE!
THE REAL THING TO MAKE ALL THE DESPERATE HOPES WORTHWHILE...
STALKER OF THE SKY
JACKALOPE
--WHATEVER YA WANT!
CITY SEWER DEVIL
GOT THAT IN ONE, NATURAL!
YOU TELL HIM, AETHNICUS-- WE DON'T WORK CHEAP! AND TELL HIM NO VIDEO OR PHOTOGRAPHS!
AETHNICI'S RIGHT, WE SELL THAT IN THE GIFT SHOP, A 70-30 SPLIT-- YOU'RE THIRTY. NOW, ABOUT BILLING--
AND AIR CONDITIONING-- THIS THING'S DYING FOR A.C.! AND BOTTLED WATER-- I WON'T DRINK THAT TAP SHIT!
OH THANKYOU THANKYOU THANKYOU...
WHATEVER... WHATEVER YA WANT...

IPORIUM
Coke
THAT'S RIGHT... THEM GLOSSY TYPE MATCHBOOKS... UH-HUH, "GENTILE'S FANTASTIC FIRE LIZARDS!"... NO, I LIKE THE WAY IT SOUNDS JUST FINE...
... T-SHIRTS AND BUMPER STICKERS? WELL, WHY DON'T YOU JUST SEND YER SALESMAN OUT MY WAY?
P.T. BARNUM
PRESENTS
Charlie Chaplin
LESSEE... "GREATEST SHOWMAN IN THE MODERN WORLD!" HMMM.
HOWZ'BOUT... "GENTILE'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT!" MAYBE.
"ENTERTAIN-MENT TONIGHT? WELL, SURE YA CAN SEND YER CAMERA CREW ON DOWN..."
CARRY THE SIX... THASSA LOTTA MONEY, MOMMA, BABY'S BUYIN' HIM-SELF A NEW PAIR A' SHOES--ADD THE 10...
SHOWING OFF THOSE NIGHTBREED! SURE AS HELL DON'T NEED THE WILD TALK THAT'LL LEAD TO!
AGREED, YAMA VIDATU. MOST ANARCHICAL.
10%
TOO MUCH
5290
BUT NOTE THE HUMAN, DRIVEN BY A FURIOUS LONGING.
IS IT ENOUGH OF AN INVITATION, THIS HAUNTING APPETITE?
HUH?
I'M A GIRL LIKES TO THINK SHE'S GOT AN OPEN INVITE... AS I'M SURE ALASTOR WOULD AGREE.
GAAK

NOW WHAT SAY WE GIVE THIS BLOB OF FLESH AND THOSE 'BREED FREAKS SOMETHING THAT'LL REALLY HAUNT THEM?
SNRAK!
YOU SEE THAT BLUE FLASH, PARTNER? WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
MAYBE THIS WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA, MAYBE--
AETHNIC!
LITTLE BROTHER, WHAT--?
HE HAS COME TO KNOW THE SACRED MISERY OF STRENGTH THAT LIES BENEATH THE IMPORTANT SHELL OF MEAT...
...WON'T YOU, TOO, ACCEPT MY INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE?
OH, DEAR, SWEET BAPHOMET--

WITH WHICH DO YOU HOPE TO IMPRESS ME, XIPE TOTEC?
YOUR CHATTERING LACKEY, OR THE TIRESOME DANCE OF THE SNAKES?
CHIDNA AND BASILISK STAND FOR TRADITION -- AN INFERNAL BALANCE YOU HAVE LOST SIGHT OF, YOUNG CENOBITE.
cht cht
YOU ABUSE THE RULES OF CONFIGURATION IN YOUR DISTASTEFULLY IMPASSIONED PURSUIT OF THE NIGHTBREED --
--THROWING WIDE THE PORTAL BETWEEN WORLDS, REGARDLESS OF THE COST TO DISCIPLINE.
THE CASUALTY LIST AMONG THE NIGHTBREED SPEAKS FOR MY WAR -- AND YOU FORGET YOURSELF, VASA INIQUITATI!
NEED I REMIND YOU MY AUTHORITY COMES FROM LEVIATHAN ITSELF -- AND YOU HAVE BEEN COMMANDED IN SERVICE TO THAT AUTHORITY!
YOUR WAR CONTRIBUTES NOTHING TO HELL'S DOCTRINE.
BUT HELL IS THE LEAST CONCERN WHEN YOU HAVE YOURSELF TO THINK ABOUT, HMM, ALASTOR?

ADJUST YOUR PINS TO THAT FACT OF EXISTENCE!
I SERVE LEVIATHAN, PSEUDOTHEI -- A FACT YOU WOULD DO WELL TO KEEP IN MIND.
HE IS STILL POWERFUL... HE STILL HAS LEVIATHAN'S EAR...
...IT MIGHT BE PRUDENT TO TREAD LIGHTLY STILL, MY LOVE...
DON'T WORRY YOURSELF SO, CHALKIS!
WHAT IS HAVING A GOD'S EAR --
--OH, YES, PIERCE ME THERE! --
--TO THOSE WHO WILL SOON HAVE A GOD?
SALOON
"CAN WE BE SURE OF OUR CONFIGURATION, ALASTOR?"
"THE SEED THAT'S BEEN PLANTED BEARS OUR MARK NOW, LOVE. IT WILL SERVE AS OUR DOORWAY...
WHEN DID THEY GET HERE, LORI? HOW?
"...AND IT WILL GROW TO ECLIPSE HELL ITSELF!"
LAST NIGHT, ON THE WIND, THROUGH THE GROUND, SOME WAYS IT'S BETTER NOT ASKING ABOUT.
BOONE -- CABAL --CALLED, AND YOU DON'T BLOW OFF THE MESSIAH!
SALOON
SO HE'S REALLY KIND OF A JUNIOR J.C. OR SOMETHING? WOMAN TO WOMAN, DOESN'T THAT GET--
OH YEAH, IT'S WEIRD SHACKING UP WITH A SAVIOR--

glub glub
ALRIGHT, WE'VE ALL HEARD YOUR HORROR STORIES OF WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING TO US--
--BUT I'VE HEARD OF STRANGER THINGS--
SURE, LUDE, BAPHOMET'S SAID NO TO EATIN' HUMAN MEAT... STILL TASTES GOOD, THOUGH!
LET'S DO IT TO A LIVE ONE NEXT!

--NOW WE NEED IDEAS ON WHAT'S BEHIND IT!
WELL--AN' MAYBE THIS AIN'T NOTHIN'--BUT WHEN MIDIAN WENT DOWN I GRABBED HOLD A' SOME, Y' KNOW, MOMENTOES LIKE...
...OR AT LEAST STUFF MIGHT BE WORTH A FEW BUCKS!
MAY I, GALLOWS?
'S FROM THE MURAL. IT WAS GONNA GET STOMPED AN'...
...WELL, I THOUGHT IN THE CORNER THERE...
OH, BABETTE, STOP ACTIN' LIKE SUCH A MONSTER!

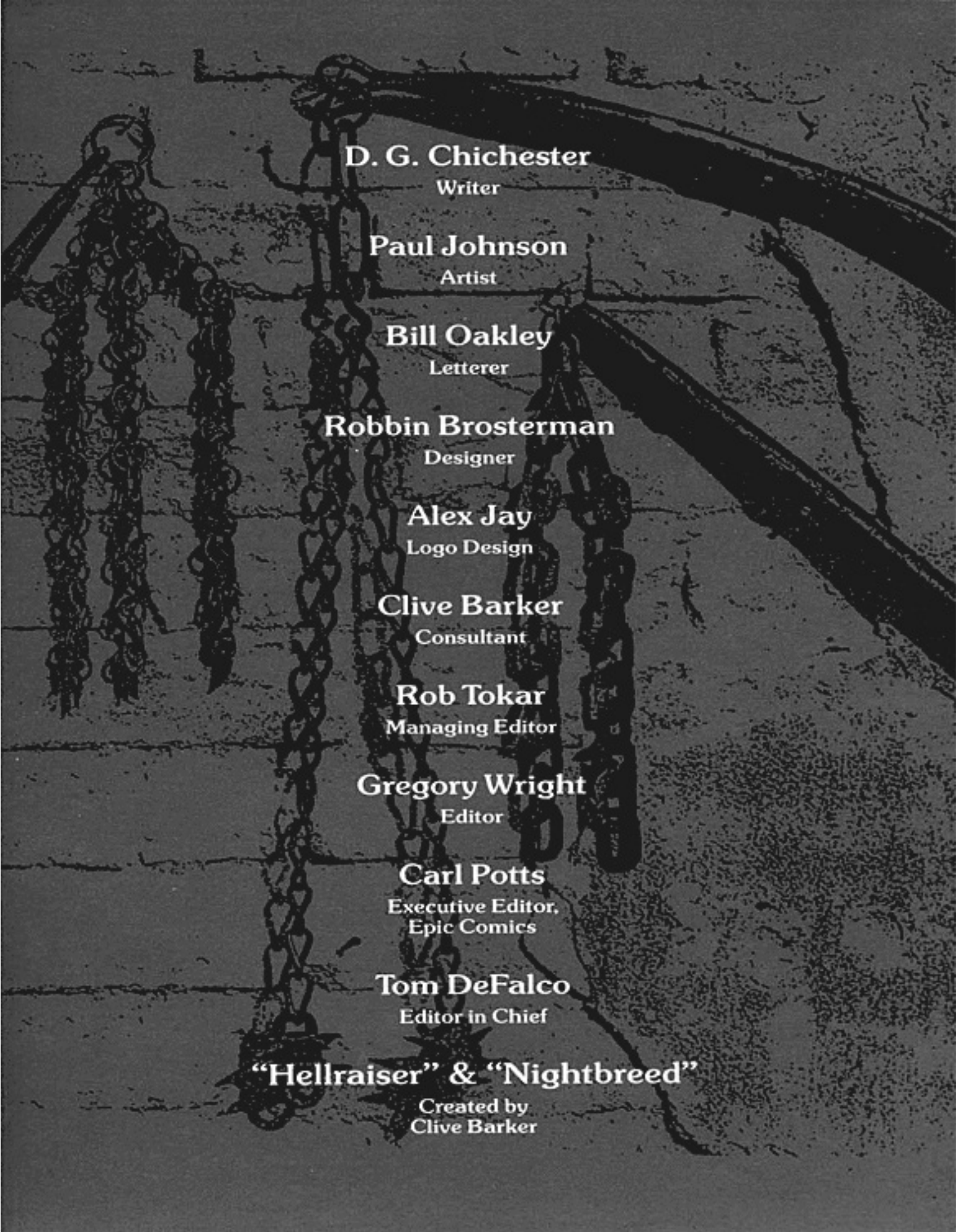
THAT BOX-- LIKE MY BERSERKERS!
SO WHADDA YOU THINK? WORTH A FEW BUCKS?
JUST KIDDING!
THAT'S FROM THE START OF THE MURAL...
...WHAT'VE WE GOT, SOMETHING OUT OF THE PAST RETURNED TO HUNT 'BREED?
WHAT WE GOT IS BULLSHIT SO THICK IT'S GETTIN' HARD TO BREATHE.
I GO WAAAY BACK, AN' I AIN'T NEVER HEARD A' NO ANCIENT EVIL RUBIK'S CUBES!
CABAL? ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
DON'T KNOW, KINSKI ... MAYBE JUST A FEELING...
WORD IS YOU AVOIDED THE STONEWORK, PELOQUIN, FEARFUL OF YOUR OWN IMAGE THERE -- THAT YOUR BITE WOULD GIVE RISE TO CABAL AND SIGNAL MIDIAN'S END.
WHAT MIGHT YOU HAVE ALSO MISSED AT ITS BEGINNING?
THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE GUIDES THE SEARCH FOR THOSE NATURAL SECRETS BY WHICH GOD HAS SHADOWED OUT ETERNAL THINGS.
THIS MAY ALSO BE A KEY, OF SORTS... BUT WHAT SECRETS SUCH A TRANSMUTATOR MIGHT LEAD TO MAY NOT BE WORTH THE PRICE OF KNOWING.
A FEELING-- LIKE WHEN I LOOKED THROUGH THE WITCH'S TELESCOPE!
BAPHOMET PRESERVE US...

SO WHAT'RE YOU SAYING? WATCH OUR BACKS AGAINST A BOX?
THSSS
SHRAK
LEMME CLUE YOU IN ON A "NATURAL SECRET," ALCHEMIST --SOMETHIN'S IN YOUR FACE, RIP OFF ITS HEAD!
END O' STORY.
OH, PELOQUIN, IF IT WAS ONLY SO SIMPLE... BUT A BOX IS NOT THE ONLY FORM SUCH A TRANSMUTATOR MAY TAKE...
WHAT, THEN? WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?
PATTY?!
GRAA
INSIDES TWISTING-- FEEL LIKE I'M ON FIRE--
WE'VE GOT TO CLEAR THE 'BREED OUT OF HERE-- NOW! ALL OF YOU-- RUN! GET OUT! GET--
CABAL, WHAT--?!
BAD TIMES. COMING FAST AND HARD.
"KINSKI, OH GOD, KINSKI, IT'S TOO LATE--"

"--THEY'RE HERE! WHATEVER THEY ARE, THEY'RE HERE!"
PATTY, HOLD ON! JUST--
BOONE!
TEARING ME UP, MY GUTS--
LORI? WHAT--?
BOONE, BEHIND YOU!
DO IT, LOVER, DO IT!
YES--FOR US!

LORI... I'LL NEVER LEAVE... I'LL NEVER...
HEED MY WORD, NIGHTBREED!
YOUR BAPHOMET ABANDONED YOU AFTER MIDIAN. YOUR CABAL LIES DEAD HERE AND NOW.
IF YOU STILL WANT GODS TO WORSHIP--
--HERE WE ARE!

"Round and round the shutter'd Square
I stroll'd with the Devil's arm in mine.
No sound but the scrape of his hoofs was there
And the ring of his laughter and mine."
— Max Beerbohm
NEXT: ...SO BELOW



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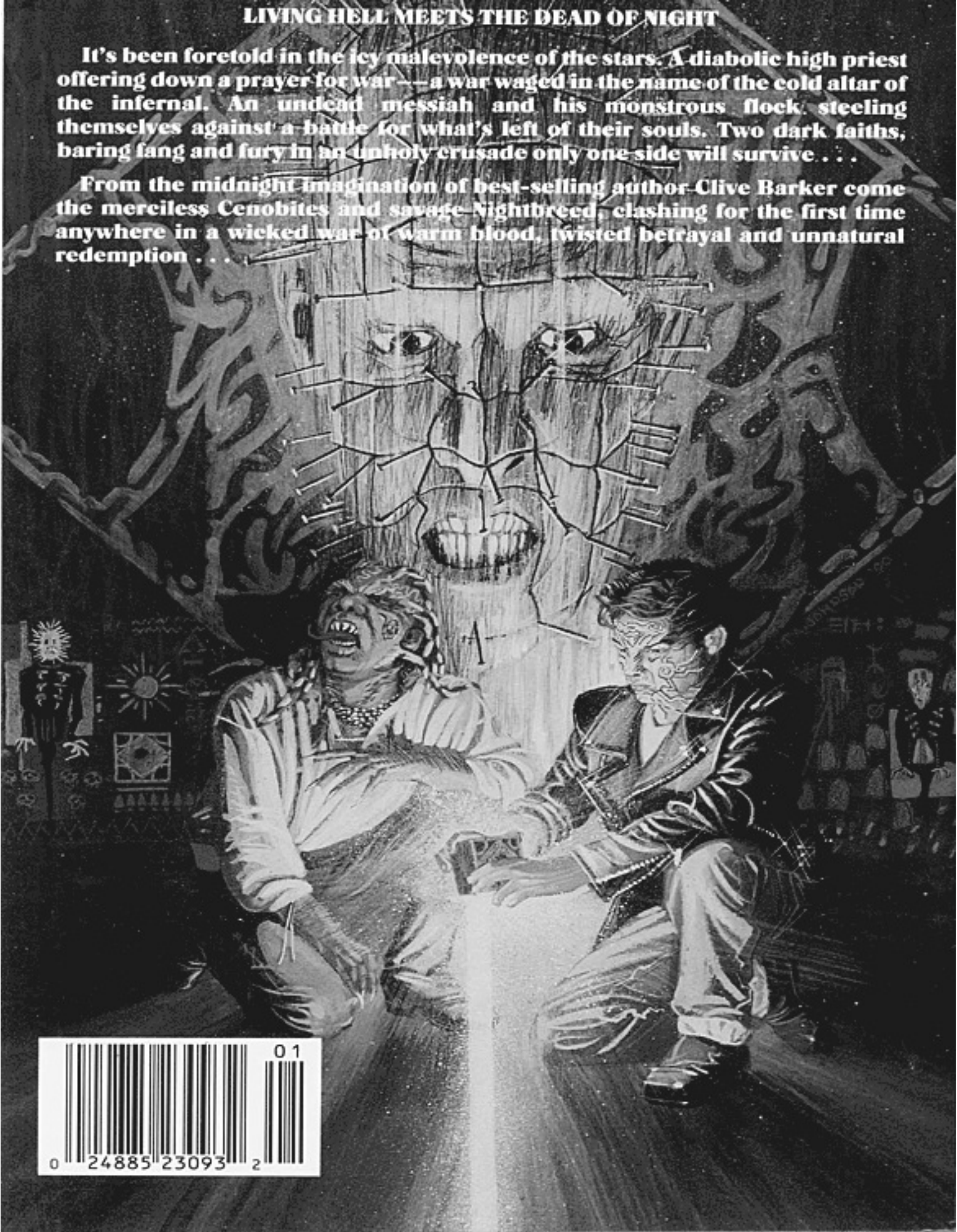

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